



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

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Testimony of Lori Pelletier
Secretary-Treasurer Connecticut AFL-CIO
Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 13, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Prague and Representative Zalaski, and members of the Labor and Public Employees committee. My name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Secretary -Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, and I am here to testify on behalf of our 900 affiliated local unions who represent over 200,000 union members from all 169 cities and towns.

S.B. No. 352 (RAISED) AN ACT CREATING A PROCESS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO COLLECTIVELY BARGAIN WITH THE STATE.

We support this bill. These workers provide a necessary and important service, and the fact that they are being paid with tax dollars through Care4Kids program. As a state we should ensure that our children are able to have the best child care, and this is accomplished when these child care workers have a voice in their work place.

This bill will set the stage for a more stable workforce who receives better wages and benefits and has an opportunity to collectively work with the State to ensure the very best for our children.

H.B. No. 5311 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS THAT ARE PRIVATELY FUNDED.

This bill is unnecessary, prevailing rate is clearly defined in statute and we are unaware of any confusion regarding this issue. We urge the committee to not act on this bill.

H.B. No. 5312 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STATE RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS.

We oppose this bills drafted. Changes to collective bargaining agreements have always been handled codifications of the CBA not through separate bills.

H.B. No. 5399 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS AND THE SECOND INJURY FUND.

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We support this bill. By clarifying the language in statute it will remove any questions that state auditors may have regarding the Second Injury Fund and the State Treasurer's ability to resolve issue under their perusal.

H.B. No. 5400 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM CONTRIBUTION RATE.

We strongly oppose this bill. We understand the concerns by those who are proponents of this legislation, however, by putting this burden on municipal workers who have had little or no pay increases over the past several years is a burden that they shouldn't have to carry.

Many municipal workers are not covered by social security and they contribute their earning into the MERS system with the understanding they will have retirement security. This legislation doubles the costs to these workers without doubling the end result. We are happy to work with all parties to resolve the concerns, however, this legislation is a untenable and we will work to make sure it is not enacted into law.

H.B. No. 5401 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING LEASEBACKS AND THE PREVAILING WAGE THRESHOLD.

We oppose this bill. We see no gain for workers by this change. Indeed, it will reduce the construction market further for prevailing rate contractors. A \$750,000. job is not chicken feed and hardly can be classified as a "small job." In addition, why should the state, in effect, subsidize building costs for contractors or owners who are leasing the property to the state or other governmental subdivisions for a limited time (duration of the lease) and then can reap further benefits over other land lords by offering lower rents.

This is, in our opinion, another ploy by the anti-prevailing rate contractors and their trade organization to weaken the prevailing rate laws. If it starts in the building phase, it will not be long before the same elevation of application will be sought for heavy and highway work, including bridges, and other transportation investments.

We urge the committee to reject this legislation.

H.B. No. 5402 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.

We appreciate the committee's concern with our unemployment system. We have seen the effects of not regularly increasing the base wage for taxing purposes or the base wage for compensation purposes. We suggest an addition to the task force of the Connecticut AFL-CIO. As the largest organization representing workers we can provide a diverse voice on the issues to be addressed by the task force.

H.B. No. 5403 (RAISED) AN ACT PROHIBITING LOBBYING BY STATE EMPLOYEES ON STATE TIME.

We oppose this bill as written. First of all a number of state employees as a matter of their job as legislative liaisons are required to lobby. Secondly, the issue of union release time is a matter of collective bargaining, and for the employer which in this instance the state is, to determine what a union release day can be used for is improper outside the collective bargaining process.

Being a union member is about having a voice on the job and this bill is the polar opposite and is looking to take away those voices. We urge the committee to reject this bill, and not move it out of committee.

We appreciate the committee holding this public hearing and would be happy to address your questions. Thank you.